

A
L E T T E R
FROM THE
RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE, *M. P.*
IN THE KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN,
TO
SIR HERCULES LANGRISHE, BART. *M. P.*
ON THE SUBJECT OF
ROMAN CATHOLICS OF IRELAND,
AND THE
PROPRIETY OF ADMITTING THEM
TO THE
ELECTIVE FRANCHISE
CONSISTENTLY WITH THE
PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION
AS ESTABLISHED AT THE
REVOLUTION.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

AN opinion has been circulated that Mr. Burke's Letter upon the subject of the Roman Catholics is written in a spirit of hostility to the Dissenters, and with an intention to wound their feelings and injure their reputation. There are always some persons in the world who, being destitute of the qualities necessary to attract the confidence of any set of men, imagine, they indemnify themselves, and obtain the ends of envy, if not of interest, by spreading suspicion and hostility amongst the rest of mankind. It is not at all surprising that such persons should greedily seize every pretext of partial construction and forced interpretation, to represent a well-intentioned argument in behalf of the Roman Catholics, as an invidious attack upon another religious persuasion—as if it was impossible to defend the rights of mankind upon *general principles* (not upon partial distinctions), and to be equally the friend and protector of every mode of faith.

SEVERAL passages in Mr. Burke's Letter have been pointed out as tending to fix an imputation on the Dissenters of harbouring a design of some sort or other unfavourable to the constitution. The Editor can take upon himself, with the greatest truth, to assure the public, that, *to his certain knowledge*, it was not in any degree in Mr. Burke's intention to throw any imputation whatever on that great and respectable body, the Dissenters of Ireland—or on any individual of that body. Mr. Burke is a man of too much experience in public affairs, and too much equity of mind, to charge any great and general description of men (which must necessarily contain a great diversity of tempers and characters) with any species of criminality. He himself, in another of his works, justly remarks, that “crimes are the acts of individuals, and not of denominations;” and he reprobates the injustice of “classing men under general descriptions, in order to prescribe and punish them in the lump for a presumed delinquency.” Mr. Burke had no temptation whatever to be guilty of this injustice, much less would he go out of his way to commit it. A very little reflection will convince every man that it could not be the case in this instance. Mr. Burke is not ignorant that the Dissenters of this kingdom form one half, if not a majority, of its Protestant inhabitants.—It is not likely that, in a publication which was intended to reconcile the Protestant interest to Roman Catholic privilege, Mr. Burke should have been intentionally so defective in common prudence as to disgust without necessity, and even to criminate so great a portion of those whose opinions it was his business to gain. The tone of Mr. Burke's Letter is that of a dispassionate and conciliatory disquisition; and studiously avoids the style of controversy. Mr. Burke knows how to write with asperity, and if he had been so inclined, it is probable he would not have selected, as the subjects of his satire or invective, the well-wishers to a cause in which he is evidently, not indifferent.

IF the general drift of Mr. Burke's Letter be considered, and the passages objected to be compared with the context, those which appear to affect the character of the Dissenters, by associating that name with projects of violent and irrational alterations in the constitution, will be found, *not* to be the assertions of Mr. Burke, nor by any means declarations of his opinion. It is to be recollected that this Letter is not a spontaneous effusion, but an answer to another letter.—There is nothing more common than in arguments which consist both of fact and inference, to allow the fact (*argumenti causâ*) and to proceed directly to the refutation of the inference. It is indeed the most compendious method, because an error in reasoning may be brought home to the mind at once, while to correct an error in fact may require a long investigation. These short and simple principles afford a sufficient explanation of the misconstructions which have been put on Mr. Burke's Letter.

IT is impossible not to have observed, in the course of the late discussions, that one of the principal objections urged against the Roman Catholics was a pretended junction between them and the Dissenters, formed for the purpose of introducing a system of pure democracy. Some charged this association as having actually taken place, and others imputed it as a *solicitation on the part of the Dissenters*.—But in both cases it was urged as an insurmountable objection to the claims of the Catholics. In order more fully to comprehend the extent of the charge made against the Dissenters, it is only necessary to read the following Extract from a pamphlet published with great parade at the beginning of the year, and which may be regarded as a sort of manifesto against both Catholics and Dissenters. It is intitled, in a strange and pedantic jargon, *Presbytero Catholicon*. The passage is as follows;—it is addressed to the Catholics.

“ CONSIDER now the principles of those, in union with whom, you are called upon thus to forfeit all that was honourable and safe in your character.—*The Presbyterians in this Country* are, in the *strictest* sense of the word, in a civil view, independents. It is not because our mode of worship, in any of its particulars, is irreconcilable to them, that they are *enemies to our church establishment*. It is not because your ceremonies or your faith contain any thing less offensive to them, that they are now *so much your friends*. Enemies alike to *both our systems*, and certainly not more friendly or civil to your idolatries than ours (for they apply the term to us all), they *sidet and contort* under our establishment, because it is *their PRINCIPLE* to pull down and level *all establishments*, either of *policy* or hierarchy. And they would be glad to use your impatience and discontent, (if sentiments of such a nature should become prevalent amongst you) in order, not to mend your condition, but to better their own, while *their object is to prostrate*, both in Church and STATE, every thing which has the *appearance* of establishment, or implies a necessity of Rank and SUBORDINATION.”

A GREAT part of Mr. Burke's Letter is evidently directed to the refutation of arguments founded on some such assertions as those drawn from “ the supposed disposition of the Catholics to unite with the Dissenters ”—arguments which, he says, he “ does not know how to shape so as to gain admittance for them into a rational mind.” In the refutation of these arguments it will be found, on an attentive perusal, that Mr. Burke makes no assertion whatsoever with regard to the Dissenters as a body, nor even with regard to individuals, other than hypothetically. Nor do the expressions which may be thought most offensive apply exclusively to them. He talks (but hypothetically also) “ of the low, thoughtless and profligate ” among the Roman Catholics, on whom, as a body, it cannot be thought he wishes to cast reflections. It is indeed very improbable that Mr. Burke should be disposed to reflect upon the conduct of the Dissenters, more especially those who take part with the Roman Catholics. Those amongst them who contend the most strenuously and to the greatest extent, for the restoration of the great mass of the people of Ireland to the privileges of the British constitution, the most concur in opinion with Mr. Burke, and are the most likely to meet his sincere approbation. They labour for the same end which he does himself; nor could he condemn their motives without throwing a suspicion upon his own. Mr. Burke undoubtedly considers an ardent zeal to promote the emancipation of the Roman Catholics as true and as the *only true Irish patriotism*. It is the greatest service that ever was, or that ever can be, rendered to the kingdom of Ireland. And instead of regarding a generous feeling for the sufferings of that unhappy people, and a desire to raise them from the shameful degradation of statute servitude, to the franchises of the ancient common law, as evidence of design to subvert the constitution, Mr. Burke's principles lead him to consider that desire as a full exculpation of (because it is perfectly incompatible with) every design prejudicial to public happiness and rational liberty. The thorough incorporation of the Roman Catholics, whether sudden or gradual, into all the privileges, benefits, and advantages of the state, is the only possible means by which any similitude of the British constitution can be preserved in Ireland.

L E T T E R, &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR remembrance of me, with sentiments of so much kindness, has given me the most sincere satisfaction. It perfectly agrees with the friendly and hospitable reception which my son and I received from you, some time since, when, after an absence of twenty-two years, I had the happiness of embracing you, among my few surviving friends.

I really imagined that I should not again interest myself in any public business. I had, to the best of my moderate faculties, paid my club to the Society, which I was born, in some way or other, to serve: and I thought I had a right to put on my night gown and slippers, and with a cheerful evening to the good company I must leave behind. But if our resolutions of vigour and exertion are so often broken or procrastinated in the execution; I think we may be excused, if we are not very punctual in fulfilling our engagements to indolence, and inactivity. I have indeed no power of action; and am almost a cripple, even with regard to thinking: but you descend with force into the stagnant pool; and you cause such a fermentation, as to cure at least one impotent creature of his lameness, though it cannot enable him either to run or to wrestle.

You see by the paper I take*, that I am likely to be long, with malice prepense. You have brought under my view, a subject, always difficult, at present critical.—It has filled my thoughts, which I wish to lay open to you with the clearness and simplicity which your friendship demands from me. I thank you for the communication of your ideas. I should be still more pleased if they had been more your own. What you hint, I believe to be the case; that if you had not deferred to the judgment of others, our opinions would not differ more materially at this day, than they did when we used to confer on the same subject, so many years ago. If I still persevere in my old opinions, it is no small comfort to me, that it is not with regard to doctrines properly yours, that I discover my indocility.

The case upon which your letter of the 10th of December turns, is hardly before me with precision enough, to enable me to form any very certain judgment upon it. It seems to be some plan of further indulgence proposed for Catholics of Ireland. You observe, “that your general principles are not changed, but *that times and circumstances are altered.*” I perfectly agree with you, that times and circumstances, considered with reference to the public, ought very much to govern our conduct; though I am far from slighting, when applied with discretion to those circumstances, general principles, and maxims of policy. I cannot help observing, however, that you have said rather less upon the applicability of your own old principles to the

* *The letter is written on folio sheets.*

circumstances that are likely to influence your conduct against these principles, than of the general maxims of state; which I can very readily believe not to have great weight with you personally.

In my present state of imperfect information, you will pardon the errors into which I may easily fall. The principles you lay down are, "that the Roman Catholics should enjoy every thing under the state, but should not be *the state itself*." And you add, "that when you exclude them from being a part of the state, you rather conform to the spirit of the age, than to any abstract doctrine;" but you consider the constitution as already established—that our state is Protestant. "It was declared so at the revolution. It was so provided in the acts for settling the succession of the Crown:—the King's coronation oath was enjoined, in order to keep it so. The King, as first magistrate of the state, is obliged to take the oath of abjuration, and to subscribe the declaration; and by laws subsequent, every other magistrate and member of the state, and legislature and executive, are bound under the same obligation."

As to the plans to which these maxims are applied, I cannot speak, as I told you, positively about it. Because, neither from your letter, nor from any information I have been able to collect, do I find any thing settled; either on the part of the Roman Catholics themselves, or on that of any persons who may wish to conduct their affairs in Parliament. But if I have leave to conjecture, something is in agitation towards admitting them, under certain qualifications, to have some share in the election of members of parliament. This I understand is the scheme of those who are entitled to come within your description of *persons of consideration, property, and character*: and firmly attached to the king and constitution as by "law established, with a grateful sense of your former concessions, and a patient reliance on the benignity of parliament, for the further mitigation of the laws that still affect them."—*As to the low, thoughtless, wild and profligate, who have joined themselves with those of other professions, but of the same character*; you are not to imagine, that, for a moment, I can suppose them to be met, with any thing else than the manly and enlightened energy of a firm government, supported by the united efforts of all virtuous men: if ever their proceedings should become so considerable as to demand its notice. I really think that such associations should be crushed in their very commencement. Setting this, therefore, out of the question, it becomes an object of very serious consideration, whether because wicked men of various descriptions are engaged in seditious courses; the rational, sober, and valuable part of one description should not be indulged in their sober and rational expectations? You, who have looked deeply into the spirit of the Popery laws, must be perfectly sensible, that a great part of the present mischief which we abhor in common, has arisen from them. Their declared object was to reduce the Catholics of Ireland to a miserable populace, without property, without estimation, without education. The professed object was to deprive the few men who, in spite of those laws, might hold or obtain any property amongst them, of all sort of influence or authority over the rest. They divided the nation into two distinct bodies, without a common interest, sympathy or connexion; one of which bodies was to possess *all* the franchises, *all* the property, *all* the education: the others were to be drawers of water and cutters of turf for them. Are we to be astonished that when, by the efforts of so much violence in conquest, and so much policy in regulation, continued without intermission for near an hundred years, we had reduced them to a mob; that whenever they came to act at all, many of them would act exactly like a mob, without temper, measure, or foresight? Surely it might be just now a matter of temperate discussion, whether you ought not apply a remedy to the real cause

cause of the evil—to raise an aristocratic interest; that is an interest of property and education amongst them: and to strengthen, by every prudent means, the authority and influence of men of that description. It will deserve your best thoughts, to examine whether this can be done, without giving such persons the means of demonstrating to the rest, that something more is to be got by their temperate conduct, than can be expected from the wild and senseless projects of those, who do not belong to their body, who have no interest in their well being, and only wish to make them the dupes of their turbulent ambition.

If the absurd persons you mention, find no way of providing for liberty, but by overturning this happy constitution, and introducing a frantic democracy, let us take care how we prevent better people from any rational expectations of partaking in the benefits of that constitution as it stands. The maxims you establish cut the matter short. They have no sort of connexion with the good or ill behaviour of the persons who seek relief, or with the proper or improper means by which they seek it. They form a perpetual bar to all pleas and to all expectations.

You begin by asserting that “they ought to enjoy all things under the state, but that they ought not to be the state.” A position which, I believe, in the latter part of it, and in the latitude there expressed, no man of common sense has ever thought proper to dispute: because the contrary implies, that the state ought to be in them *exclusively*. But before you have finished the line, you express yourself as if the other of your proposition, namely, that “they ought not to be a part of the state,” were necessarily included in your first—Whereas I conceive it to be as different, as a part is from the whole; that is just as different as possible. I know indeed that it is common with those who talk very different from you, that is with heat and animosity, to confound those things, and to argue the admission of the Catholics into any, however minute and subordinate parts of the state, as a surrender into their hands of the whole government of the kingdom. To them I have nothing at all to say.

Wishing to proceed with a deliberative spirit and temper in so very serious a question, I shall attempt to analyze, as well as I can, the principles you lay down, in order to fit them for the grasp of an understanding so little comprehensive as mine—State—Protestant—Revolution.—These are terms, which if not well explained, may lead us into many errors.—In the word *State*, I conceive there is much ambiguity. The state is sometimes used to signify *the whole common wealth*, comprehending all its orders, with the several privileges belonging to each. Sometimes it signifies only *the higher and ruling part* of the common-wealth; which we commonly call *the Government*. In the first sense, to be under the state, but not the state itself, nor any part of it, is a situation perfectly intelligible; but to those who fill that situation, not very pleasant, when it is understood. It is a state of *civil servitude* by the very force of the definition. *Servorum non est republica*, is a very old and a very true maxim. This servitude, which makes men *subject* to a state without being *citizens*, may be more or less tolerable from many circumstances: but these circumstances, more or less favourable, do not alter the nature of the thing. The mildness by which absolute masters exercise their dominion, leaves them masters still. We may talk a little presently of the manner in which the majority of the people of Ireland (the Catholics) are affected by this situation; which at present undoubtedly is theirs, and which you are of opinion, ought to continue for ever.

In the other sense of the word *State*, by which is understood the *Supreme Government* only, I must observe this upon the question: that to exclude whole classes of men entirely from this *part* of government, cannot be con-

sidered as *absolute slavery*. It only implies a lower and degraded state of citizenship; such is (with more or less strictness) the condition of all countries, in which an hereditary nobility possesses the exclusive rule. This may be no bad mode of government, provided that the personal authority of individual nobles be kept in due bounds; if their cabals and factions are guarded against with a severe vigilance; and if the people, who have no share in granting their own money, are subjected to but light imposition, and are otherwise treated with attention, and with indulgence to their humours and prejudices.

The republic of Venice is one of those which strictly confines all the great functions and offices, such as are truly *state*-functions and *state*-offices, to those who by hereditary right or admission are noble Venetians. But there are many offices, and some of them not mean nor unprofitable; which are reserved for the *Citta dini*. Of these all citizens of Venice are capable. The inhabitants of the *Terra firma* who are mere subjects of conquest, that is, as you express it, under the state, but "not a part of it," are not, however, subjects in so very rigorous a sense as not to be capable of numberless subordinate employments. It is indeed one of the advantages attending the narrow bottom of their aristocracy (narrow as compared with their acquired dominions, otherwise broad enough) that an exclusion from such employments cannot possibly be made amongst their subjects. There are, besides, advantages in states so constituted, by which those who are considered as of an inferior race, are indemnified for their exclusion from the government and from noble employments. In all these countries, either by express laws, or by usage more operative, the noble casts are almost universally, in their turn, excluded from commerce, manufacture, farming of land, and in general from all lucrative civil professions. The non-nobles have the monopoly of all the means of acquiring wealth. Thus some sort of a balance is formed among conditions; a sort of compensation is furnished to those, who, in a *limited sense*, are excluded from the government of the state.

Between the extreme of a *total exclusion*, to which your maxim goes, and an *universal unmodified capacity*, to which the fanatics pretend, there are many different degrees and stages, and a great variety of temptations, upon which prudence may give full scope to its exertions. For you know that the decisions of prudence (contrary to the system of the insane reasoners) differ from those of judicature; and that almost all the former are determined on the more or the less, the earlier or the later, and on a balance of advantage and inconvenience, of good and evil.

In all considerations which turn upon the question of vesting or continuing the state solely and exclusively in some one description of citizens; prudent legislators will consider, how far *the general form and principles of their common-wealth render it fit to be cast into an oligarchical shape, or remain always in it*. We know that the government of Ireland (the same as the British) is not in its constitution *wholly* Aristocratical; and as it is not such in its form, so neither is it in its spirit. If it had been inveterately aristocratical, exclusions might be more patiently submitted to. The lot of one plebeian would be the lot of all; and an habitual reverence and admiration of certain families, might make the people content to see government wholly in hands to whom it seemed naturally to belong. But our constitution has a *plebeian member*, which forms an essential integrant part of it. A plebeian oligarchy is a monster in itself; and no people, not absolutely domestic or predial slaves, will long endure it. The Protestants of Ireland are not *alone* sufficiently the people to form a democracy; and they are *too numerous* to answer the ends and purposes of an *aristocracy*. Admiration, that first source of obedience, can be only the claim or the imposture of the few. I hold it to be absolutely impossible for too millions of plebeians, composing certainly a very clear and decided majority in that class, to become

so far in love with six or seven hundred thousand of their fellow-citizens (to all outward appearance like themselves, and many of them tradesmen, servants, and otherwise inferior to them) as to see with satisfaction, or even with patience, an exclusive power vested in them, by which constitutionally they become their absolute masters; and by the manners derived from their circumstances, must be capable of exercising upon them, daily and hourly, an insulting and vexatious superiority; nor are they indemnified (as in some aristocracies) for this state of humiliating vassalage (often inverting the nature of things and relations) by having the lower walks of industry wholly abandoned to them. They are rivalled, to say the least of the matter, in every laborious and lucrative course of life: while every franchise, every honour, every trust, every place down to the very lowest and least confidential, (besides whole professions) is reserved for the master cast.

Our constitution is not made for great, general, and proscriptive exclusions; sooner or later, it will destroy them, or they will destroy the constitution. In our constitution there has always been a difference made between a *franchise* and an *office*, and between the capacity for the one and for the other. Franchises were supposed to belong to the *subject*, as a *subject*, and not as a *member of the governing part of the state*. The policy of government has considered them as things very different: for whilst Parliament excluded by the test acts (and for a while these test acts were not a dead letter, as now they are in England) Protestant dissenters from all civil and military employments, they *never touched their right of voting for members of Parliament, or sitting in either House*; a point I state, not as approving or condemning the measure of exclusion from employments, but to prove that the distinction has been admitted in legislature, as, in truth, it is founded in reason.

I will not here examine, whether the principles of the British [the Irish] constitution, be wise or not. I must assume that they are; and that those who partake the franchises which make it, partake of a benefit. They who are excluded from votes (under proper qualifications inherent in the constitution that gives them) are excluded, not from the *state*, but from *the British constitution*. They cannot by any possibility, whilst they hear its praises continually rung in their ears, and are present at the declaration which is so generally and so bravely made by those who possess the privilege—that the best blood in their veins ought to be shed, to preserve their share in it; they cannot, I say, think themselves in an *happy* state, to be utterly excluded from all its direct and all its consequential advantages. The popular part of the constitution must be to them, by far the most odious part of it. To them it is not an *actual*, and, if possible, still less a *virtual* representation. It is indeed the direct contrary. It is power unlimited, placed in the hands of an *adverse* description, *because it is an adverse description*. And if they who compose the privileged body have not an interest, they must but too frequently have motives of pride, passion, petulance, peevish jealousy, or tyrannic suspicion, to urge them to treat the people with contempt and rigour. This is not a mere theory; though whilst men are men, it is a theory that cannot be false. I do not wish to revive all the particulars in my memory; I wish them to sleep for ever; but it is impossible I should wholly forget what happened in some parts of Ireland, with very few and short intermissions, from the year 1761 to the year 1766, both inclusive. In a country of miserable police, passing from the extremes of laxity to the extremes of rigour, among a neglected; and therefore disorderly populace: if any disturbance or sedition, from any grievance real or imaginary happened to arise, it was presently perverted from its true nature, often criminal enough in itself to draw upon it a severe

appropriate

appropriate punishment, it was metamorphosed into a conspiracy against the state, and prosecuted as such. The object was, that those persons in the obnoxious description (in which all offenders will be most commonly found, because the most numerous and the most wretched) who could not easily, from their character and property, be suspected of the crimes of the lowest people, might be involved in the odium of the suspicion, and sometimes in the punishment of a higher and far more criminal species of offence. This did not arise from any one of the Popery laws since repealed; but from this circumstance, that the people of that description had no hold on the gentlemen who aspired to be popular representatives; and that the candidates neither loved, nor respected, nor feared them individually or collectively. I do not think this evil (an evil amongst a thousand others) at this day entirely over; for I conceive I have lately seen some indication of a disposition perfectly similar to the old ones; that is, a disposition to carry the imputation of crimes from persons to descriptions, and wholly to alter the character and quality of the offences themselves.

This universal exclusion seems to me a serious evil—because many collateral oppressions, besides what I have just now stated, have arisen from it. In things of this nature, it would not be either easy or proper to quote chapter and verse: but I have great reason to believe, particularly since the octennial act, several have refused at all to let their lands to Roman Catholics; because it would so far disable them from promoting such interests in counties as they were inclined to favour. They who consider also the state of all sorts of tradesmen, shopkeepers, and particularly publicans in towns, must soon discern the disadvantages under which those labour who have no votes. It cannot be otherwise, whilst the spirit of elections, and the tendency of human nature continue as they are. If property be artificially separated from franchise, the franchise must in some way or other, and in some proportion, naturally attract property to it. Many are the collateral disadvantages amongst a *privileged* people, which must attend those who have *no* privileges. Amongst the rich, each individual is of importance; the poor and the middling are no otherwise so, than as they obtain some collective capacity, and can be aggregated to some corps. If legal ways are not found, illegal will be resorted to; and seditious clubs and confederacies, such as no man living holds in greater horror than I do, will grow and flourish, in spite, I am afraid, of any thing which can be done to prevent unlawful gratifications. Where there is property, there will be less theft; where there is marriage, there will always be less fornication.

I have said enough of the question of state, as it affects the people merely as such. But it is complicated with a political question relative to religion, to which it is very necessary I should say something; because the term *Protestant*, which you apply, is too general for the conclusions which one of your accurate understanding would wish to draw from it; and because a great deal of argument will depend on the use that is made of that term.

It is *not* a fundamental part of the settlement at the revolution, that the state should be protestant without *any qualification of the term*. With a qualification it is unquestionably true; not in all its latitude. With the qualification, it was true before the revolution; our predecessors in legislation were not so irrational (not to say impious) as to form an operose ecclesiastical establishment, and even to render the state itself in some degree subservient to it, when their religion (if such it might be called) was nothing but a mere *negation* of some other, without any positive idea either of doctrine, discipline, worship, or morals, which they professed themselves, and which they imposed upon others, even under penalties and incapacities—No! No! This never could have been done even by reasonable atheists.

They

They who think religion of no importance to the conscience, or caprice of the individual, make no provision for it whatsoever, but leave every club to make, or not, a voluntary contribution according to their fancies. This would be consistent. The other always appeared to me to be a monster of contradiction and absurdity. It was for that reason, that some years ago I strenuously opposed the clergy who petitioned, to the number of about three hundred, to be freed from the subscription to the 39 Articles, without proposing to substitute any other in their place. There never has been a religion of the state (the few years of the parliament only excepted) but that of the church of England, before the reformation, connected with the See of Rome; since then, disconnected and protesting against some of her doctrines, and the whole of her authority, as binding in our national church; nor did the fundamental laws of this kingdom (in Ireland it has been the same) ever know, at any period, any other church as an object of establishment; or in that light, any other Protestant religion. Nay our Protestant toleration itself at the revolution, and until within a few years, required a signature of thirty-six, and a part of a thirty-seventh, out of the thirty-nine Articles. So little idea had they at the revolution of establishing Protestantism indefinitely, that they did not indefinitely tolerate it under that name. I do not mean to praise that strictness, where nothing more than merely religious toleration is concerned. Toleration being a part of moral and political prudence, ought to be tender and large, and not too scrupulous in its investigations; but may bear without blame, not only very ill-grounded doctrines, but even many things that are positively vices, where they are *adulta et prævalida*. The good of the common wealth is the only rule which rides over the rest; and to this every other must completely submit.

The church of Scotland knows as little of Protestantism *undefined*, as the church of England and Ireland do. She has by the articles of union secured to herself the perpetual establishment of the *confession of faith*, and the *Presbyterian* church government. In England, even during the troubled interregnum, it was not thought fit to establish a *negative* religion; but the Parliament settled the *Presbyterian*, as the church discipline; the directory, as the rule of public worship; and the *Westminster catechism*, as the institute of faith. This is to shew, that at no time was the Protestant religion *undefined*, established here, or any where else; as I believe. I am sure that when the three religions were established in Germany, they were expressly characterized and declared to be the Evangelic, the Reformed, and the Catholic; each of which has its confession of faith, and its settled discipline; so that you always may know the best and the worst of them, to enable you to make the most of what is good, and to correct or qualify, or guard against whatever may seem evil or dangerous.

As to the coronation oath, to which you allude as opposite to admitting a Roman Catholic to the use of any franchise whatsoever, I cannot think that the king would be perjured if he gave his assent to any regulation which Parliament might think fit to make, with regard to that affair. The king is bound by law, as clearly specified in several acts of Parliament, to be in communion with the church of England. It is a part of the tenure by which he holds his crown; and though no provision was made till the resolution, which could be called positive, and valid in law, to ascertain this great principle; I have always considered it as in fact fundamental, that the king of England should be of the Christian religion, according to the national legal church for the time being. I conceive it was so before the reformation, and that since the reformation it became doubly necessary; because the king is the head of that church; in some sort an ecclesiastical person; and it would be incongruous and absurd, to have the head of the church

church of one faith, and the members of another. The king may *inherit* the crown as a *Protestant*, but he cannot *hold it* according to law, without being a *Protestant of the church of England*.

Before we take it for granted, that the king is bound by his coronation oath, not to admit any of his Catholic subjects to the rights and liberties, which ought to belong to them as Englishmen (not as religionists) or to settle the conditions or proportions of such admission by an act of Parliament; I wish you to place before your eyes that oath itself, as it is settled in the act of William and Mary.

“ Will you to the utmost of your power maintain—1st. The laws of God.
 “ —2d. The true profession of the gospel.—3d. The Protestant reformed
 “ religion as it is established by law.—4th. And will you preserve unto *bishops*
 “ and clergy, and the churches committed to *their* charge, all such rights
 “ and privileges, as by law do, or shall appertain to them, or any of them.
 “ —All this I promise to do.”

Here are the coronation engagements of the King. In them I do not find one word to preclude his Majesty from consenting to any arrangement which Parliament may make with regard to the civil privileges of any part of his subjects.

It may not be amiss, on account of the light which it may throw on this discussion, to look a little more narrowly into the matter of that oath—in order to discover how far it has hitherto operated as a bar to any proceedings of the Crown and Parliament, in favour of those against whom it may be supposed that the king has engaged to support the Protestant church of England in the two kingdoms, in which it is established by law. First, the king swears he will maintain to the utmost of his power, “the laws of God.” I suppose they mean the natural moral laws.—Secondly, he swears to maintain “the true profession of the Gospel.” By which I suppose is understood *affirmatively* the Christian religion.—Thirdly, that he will maintain “the Protestant reformed religion.” This leaves me no power of supposition or conjecture; for it is defined and described by the subsequent “words, established by law,” and in this instance to define it beyond all “possibility of doubt, he swears to maintain the bishops and clergy, and “the churches committed to their charge,” in their rights, present and future.

This oath as effectually prevents the King from doing any thing to the prejudice of the church in favour of Sectaries, Jews, Mahometans, or plain avowed Infidels; just as if he should do the same thing in favour of the Catholics. You will see, that it is the same Protestant Church so described, which the King is to maintain and communicate with, according to the act of settlement of the 12th and 13th of William III. The act of the 5th of Ann, made in prospect of the union, is entitled, “An act for securing the “Church of England as by law established.” It meant to guard the Church implicitly against any other mode of Protestant religion which might creep in by means of the union. It proves beyond all doubt, that the legislature did not mean to guard the church on one part only, and to leave it defenceless and exposed upon every other. This church, in that act, is declared to be “fundamental and essential” for ever, in the constitution of the united kingdom, so far as England is concerned; and I suppose as the law stands, even since the independence, it is so in Ireland.

All this shews, that the religion which the King is bound to maintain, has a positive part in it as well as a negative; and that the positive part of it (in which we are in perfect agreement with the Catholics and with the Church of Scotland) is infinitely the most valuable and essential. Such an agreement we had with Protestant Dissenters in England, of those descriptions who came under the toleration act of King William and Queen Mary;

an act coeval with the revolution : and which ought, on the principles of the gentlemen who oppose the relief to the Catholics, to have been held sacred and unalterable. Whether we agree with the present Protestant Dissenters in the points at the revolution held essential and fundamental among Christians, or any other fundamental, at present it is impossible for us to know ; because at their own very earnest desire, we have repealed the toleration act of William and Mary, and discharged them from the signature required by that act ; and because we know that for the far greater part they publicly declare against all manner of confessions of faith, even the consensus. I dwell a little the longer upon this matter, and take the more pains, to put us both in mind that it was not settled at the revolution, that the state should be Protestant, in the latitude of the term, but in a defined and limited sense only ; and that, in that sense only, the King is sworn to maintain it. I do this for reasons forcible enough at all times, but at this time peculiarly so. To suppose that the King has sworn with his utmost power to maintain what is wholly out of his power to discover, or which, if he could discover, he might discover to consist of things directly contradictory to each other, some of them perhaps, impious, blasphemous and seditious upon principle, would be not only a gross, but a most mischievous absurdity. It would make a merit of dissenting from the church of England, because the man happens to dissent from the church of Rome also ; for a man is certainly the most perfect Protestant, and the most perfect Dissenter, who protests against, and dissents from the whole Christian Religion. Whether a person, having no Christian Religion, be a title to favours in exclusion to the largest description of Christians who hold all the doctrines of Christianity, though holding along with them some errors and some superfluities, is rather more than any man who has not become recalcant and apostate from his baptism, will, I believe, choose to affirm. The countenance given from a spirit of controversy to that negative religion, may, by degrees, encourage light and unthinking people to a total indifference to every thing positive in matters of doctrine ; and in the end, of practice too. If continued, it would play the game of that sort of active, profelyzing, and persecuting atheism, which is the disgrace and calamity of our time, and which we see to be as capable of subverting a government, as any mode of misguided zeal for better things.

Now let us fairly see what course has been taken relative to those, against whom, in part at least, the King has sworn to maintain a church, *positive in its doctrine and its discipline*. The first thing done, even when the oath was fresh in the mouth of the sovereigns, was to give a toleration to Protestant Dissenters, *whose doctrines they ascertained*. As to the mere civil privileges which the Dissenters held as subjects before the revolution, these were not touched at all. The laws have fully permitted, in a qualification for all offices, to such Dissenters, *an occasional conformity* ; a thing I believe singular, where tests are admitted. The act called the Test Act itself, is, with regard to them, grown to be hardly any thing more than a dead letter. Whenever the Dissenters cease by their conduct to give any alarm to the government, in church and state, I think it very probable that even this matter, rather disgusting than inconvenient to them, may be removed, or at least so modified as to distinguish the qualification to those offices which really *guide the state*, from those which are *merely instrumental* ; or that some other and better tests may be put in their place.

So far as to England.—In Ireland you have outrun us. Without waiting for an English example, you have totally, and without any modification whatsoever, repealed the test as to Protestant Dissenters ; not having the repealing act by me, I ought not to say positively that there is no exception in it. So that you know very well that a Jew in religion, or a Mahometan, or even a *public, declared Atheist*, and blasphemer, is perfectly qualified to be lord lieutenant, a lord justice, or even keeper of the king's con-

science; and by virtue of his office (if with you it be as it is with us) administrator to a great part of the ecclesiastical patronage of the crown.

Now let us a little fairly deal. We must admit, that Protestant dissent was one of the quarters from which danger was apprehended at the revolution, and against which a part of the coronation oath was peculiarly directed. By this unqualified repeal, you certainly did not mean to deny that it was the duty of the crown to preserve the church against Protestant Dissenters; or taking this to be the true sense of the two revolution acts of King William, and of the previous and subsequent union acts of Q. Anne, you did not declare by this most unqualified repeal, by which you broke down all the barriers, not invented, indeed, but carefully preserved at the revolution; you did not then and by that proceeding declare, that you had advised the king to perjury towards God, and perfidy towards the church. No! far, very far from it! you never would have done it, if you did not think it could be done with perfect repose to the royal conscience, and perfect safety to the national established religion. You did this upon a full consideration of the circumstances of your country. Now if circumstances required it, why should it be contrary to the king's oath, his parliament judging on those circumstances, to restore to his Catholic people, in such measure, and with such modifications as the public wisdom shall think proper, to add some part in these franchises which they formerly had held without any limitation at all, and which upon no sort of urgent reason at the time, they were deprived of? If such means can with any probability be shewn, from circumstances, rather to add strength to our mixed ecclesiastical and secular constitution, than to weaken it; surely they are means infinitely to be preferred to penalties, incapacities and proscriptions continued from generation to generation. They are perfectly consistent with the other parts of the Coronation Oath, in which the king swears to maintain, "The laws of God and the true profession of the gospel, and to govern the people according to the statutes in Parliament agreed upon, and the laws and customs of the realm." In consenting to such a statute, the Crown would act at least as agreeable to the laws of God, and to the true profession of the gospel, and the laws and customs of the kingdom, as George I. did when he passed the statute which took from the body of the people, every thing which, to that hour, and even after the monstrous acts of the 2d and 8th of Anne, (the objects of our common hatred) they still enjoyed inviolate.

It is hard to distinguish with the least degree of accuracy, what laws are fundamental, and what not. However there is a distinction authorized by the writers on jurisprudence, and recognized in some of our statutes. I admit the acts of King William and Queen Anne to be fundamental, but they are not the *only* fundamental laws. The law called *Magna Charta*, by which it is provided that, "no man shall be disseized of his liberties and free customs but by the judgment of his peers, or the laws of the land," (meaning clearly for some proved crime tried and adjudged) I take to be a *fundamental law*. Now this *Magna Charta*, or some of the statutes establishing it, provide that that law shall be perpetual, and all statutes contrary to it shall be void; yet I cannot go so far as to deny the authority of statutes made in defiance of *Magna Charta* and all its principles. This however I will say, that it is a very venerable law, made by very wise and learned men; and that by the attempt of the legislature to perpetuate it, even against the authority of future parliaments, they have shewn their judgment that it is *fundamental*, on the same grounds, and in the same manner that the act of the 5th of Anne has considered and declared the establishment of the church of England to be fundamental. *Magna Charta*, which secured these franchises to the subjects, regarded the rights of freeholders in counties to be as much a fundamental part of the constitution, as the establishment of the church of England was thought either at that

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time, or in the act of King William, or in the act of Queen Anne. The churchmen who led in that transaction, certainly took care of the material interest of which they were the natural guardians. Art. 1st. Magna Charta, "that the church of England shall be free," &c. &c. but churchmen, and barons, and knights, took care of the franchises and free custom of the people too. Those franchises are part of the constitution itself, and inseparable from it. It would be a very strange thing if there should not only exist, some anomalies in our laws, a thing not easy to prevent; but, that the fundamental parts of the constitution should be perpetually and irreconcilably at variance. I cannot persuade myself that the lovers of our church are not as able to find as effectual ways of reconciling its safety, with the franchises of the people, as the ecclesiastics of the thirteenth century were able to do; I cannot conceive how any thing worse can be said of the Protestant religion of the church of England than this, that wherever it is judged proper to give it a legal establishment, it becomes necessary to deprive the body of the people, if they adhere to their old opinions, of "their liberties and of all their free customs," and to reduce them to a state of *civil servitude*.

There is no man on earth, I believe, more willing than I am to lay it down as a fundamental of the constitution, that the church of England should be united and even identified with it: but allowing this, I cannot allow that *all laws of regulation, made from time to time, in support of that fundamental law*, are, of course, equally fundamental and equally unchangeable. This would be to confound all the branches of legislation and of jurisprudence.—The *Crown* and the personal safety of the monarch are *fundamentals* in our constitution: Yet, I hope that no man regrets, that the rabble of statutes got together during the reign of Henry the Eighth, by which treasons are multiplied with so prolific an energy, were all repealed in a body; although they were all or most of them, made in support of things truly fundamental in our constitution. So were several of the acts by which the crown exercised its supremacy; such as the act of Elizabeth, for making the *high commission courts*, and the like; as well as things made treason in the time of Charles II. None of this species of *secondary and subsidiary laws* have been fundamental. They have yielded to circumstances; particularly where they were thought, even in their consequences, or obliquely, to affect other fundamentals. How much more, certainly, ought they to give way, when, as in our case, they effect, not here and there, in some particular point, or in their consequence, but universally, collectively, and directly, the fundamental franchises of a people, equal to the whole inhabitants of several respectable kingdoms and states; equal to the subjects of the kings of Sardinia and Denmark; equal to those of the United Netherlands, and more than are to be found in all the states of Switzerland. This way of proscribing men by whole nations, as it were, from all the benefits of the constitution to which they were born, I never can believe to be politic or expedient, much less necessary for the existence of any state or church in the world. Whenever I shall be convinced, which will be late and reluctantly, that the safety of the church is utterly inconsistent with all the civil rights whatsoever of the far larger part of the inhabitants of our country, I shall be extremely sorry for it; because I shall think the church to be truly in danger. It is putting things into the position of an ugly alternative, into which, I hope in God, they never will be put.

I have said most of what occurs to me on the topics you touch upon, relative to the religion of the king, and his coronation oath. I shall conclude the observations which I wished to submit to you on this point, by assuring you, that I think you the most remote that can be conceived from the metaphysicians of our times, who are the most foolish of men, and who dealing in universals and essences, see no difference between more and less;

and who of course would think that the reason of the law which obliged the king to be a communicant of the church of England, would be as valid to exclude a Catholic from being an exciseman, or a man who has five hundred a year, under that description, from voting on a par with a factitious Protestant Dissenting freeholder of forty shillings. Recollect, my dear friend, that it was a fundamental principle in the French monarchy, whilst it stood, that the state should be Catholic; yet the edict of Nantz gave, not a full ecclesiastical, but a complete civil *establishment*, with places of which only they were capable, to the Calvinists of France; and there were very few employments indeed of which they were not capable. The world praised the Cardinal de Richlieu, who took the first opportunity to strip them of their fortified places and cautionary towns. The same world held and does hold in execration (so far as that business is concerned) the memory of Louis the Fourteenth, for the total repeal of that favourable edict; though the talk of "fundamental laws, established religion, religion of the prince, safety to the state," &c. &c. was then as largely held, and with as bitter a revival of the animosities of the civil confusions during the struggles between the parties, as now they can be in Ireland. Perhaps there are those who think that the same reason does not hold when the religious relation of the sovereign and subject is changed; but they who have their shop full of false weights and measures, and who think that the adding or taking away the name of Protestant or Papist, Guelph or Ghibelline, alters all the principles of equity, policy and prudence, leave us no common data upon which we can reason. I therefore pass by all this, which on you will make no impression, to come to what seems to be a serious consideration in your mind; I mean the dread you express of "re-viewing, for the purpose of altering, the *principles of the Revolution*." This is an interesting topic; on which I will, as fully as your leisure and mine permits, lay before you the ideas I have formed.

First, I cannot possibly confound in my mind all the things which were done at the Revolution, with the *principles* of the Revolution. As in most great changes many things were done from the necessities of the time, well or ill understood, from passion or from vengeance, which were not only, not perfectly agreeable to its principles, but in the most direct contradiction to them. I shall not think that the *deprivation of some millions of people of all the rights of citizens, and all interest in the constitution, in and to which they were born*, was a thing conformable to the declared principles of the Revolution. This I am sure is true relatively to England, where the operation of these *anti-principles* comparatively were of little extent, and some of our late laws on that subject admit it. But the Revolution operated differently in England and Ireland, in many, and these essential particulars. Supposing the principles to have been altogether the same in both kingdoms; by the application of those principles to very different objects, the whole spirit of the system was changed, not to say reversed. In England it was the struggle of the *great body* of the people for the establishment of their liberties, against the efforts of a very *small faction*, who would have oppressed them. In Ireland it was the establishment of the power of the smaller number, at the expence of the civil liberties and properties of the far greater part; and at the expence of the political liberties of the whole. It was, to say the truth, not a revolution, but a conquest; which is not to say a great deal in its favour. To insist on every thing done in Ireland at the Revolution, would be to insist on the severe and jealous policy of a conqueror, in the crude settlement of his new acquisition, as a *permanent* rule for its future government. This, no power, no country that ever I heard of, has done or professed to do—except in Ireland; where it is done, and possibly by some people will be professed. Time has by degrees, in all other places and periods, blended and coalited the conquered with the conquerors. So, after some time, and after one of the
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most rigid conquests that we read of in history, the Normans softened into the English. I wish you to turn your recollection to the fine speech of Cerealis to the Gauls, to dissuade them from revolt. Speaking of the Romans,—“ *Nos quamvis toties laccssiti, jure victoriæ id solum vobis addidimus, quo pacem tueremur, nam neque quies gentium sine armis; neque arma sine stipendiis, neque stipendia sine tributis, haberi queant. Cætera in communis ita sunt, ipsi plerumque nostris exercitibus præsidetis ipsi has aliasque provincias, regitis, nil speratum clausumve.*—Proinde Pacem et urbem, quam victores victique eadem jure obinemus, amate, colite.” You will consider whether the arguments used by that Roman to these Gauls, would apply to the case in Ireland; and whether you could use so plausible a preamble to any severe warning you might think it proper to hold out to those who should resort to sedition instead of supplication, to obtain any object they may pursue with the governing power.

For a far longer period than that which had sufficed to blend the Romans with the nation to which of all others they were the most adverse, the Protestants settled in Ireland, considered themselves in no other light than that of a sort of a colonial garrison, to keep the natives in subjection to the other state of Great Britain; the whole spirit of the revolution in Ireland, was that of not the mildest conqueror. In truth, the spirit of those proceedings did not commence at that æra, nor was religion of any kind their primary object. What was done, was not in the spirit of a contest between two religious factions; but between two adverse nations. The statutes of Kilkenny shew, that the spirit of the popery laws, and some even of their actual provisions, as applied between Englishry and Irishry, had existed in that harassed country before the words Protestant and Papist were heard of in the world. If we read Baron Finglas, Spenser, and Sir John Davis, we cannot miss the true genius and policy of the English government there before the revolution, as well as during the whole reign of Queen Elizabeth. Sir John Davis boasts of the benefits received by the natives, by extending to them the English law, and turning the whole kingdom into shire ground. But the appearance of things alone was changed. The original scheme was never deviated from for a single hour. Unheard of confiscations were made in the northern parts, upon grounds of plots and conspiracies, never proved upon their supposed authors. The war of chicanery succeeded to the war of arms and of hostile statutes; and a regular series of operations were carried on, particularly from Chichester's time, in the ordinary courts of justice, and by special commissions and inquisitions; first, under pretence of tenures, and then of titles in the crown, for the purpose of the total extirpation of the interest of the natives in their own soil—until this species of subtle ravage, being carried to the last excess of oppression and insolence under Lord Stafford, it kindled at length the flames of that rebellion which broke out in 1641. By the issue of that war, by the turn which the Earl of Clarendon gave to things at the restoration, and by the total reduction of the kingdom of Ireland in 1691; the ruin of the native Irish, and in a great measure too, of the first races of the English, was completely accomplished. The new English interest was settled with as solid a stability as any thing in human affairs can look for. All the penal laws of that unparalleled code of oppression, which were made after the last event, were manifestly the effects of national hatred and scorn towards a conquered people; whom the victors delighted to trample upon, and were not at all afraid to provoke. They were not the effect of their fears, but of their security. They who carried on this system, locked to the irresistible force of Great Britain for their support in their acts of power. They were quite certain that no complaints of the natives would be heard on this side of the water, with any other sentiments than those of contempt and indignation. Their cries served only

only to augment their torture. Machines which could answer their purposes so well, must be of an excellent contrivance. Indeed at that time in England, the double name of the complainants, Irish and Papists (it would be hard to say, singly, which was the most odious) shut up the hearts of every one against them. Whilst that temper prevailed, and it prevailed in all its force to a time within our memory, every measure was pleasing and popular, just in proportion as it tended to harass and ruin a set of people, who were looked upon as enemies to God and man; and indeed as a race of bigotted savages who were a disgrace to human nature itself.

However, as the English in Ireland began to be domiciliated, they began also to recollect that they had a country. The *English interest* at first by faint and almost insensible degrees, but at length openly and avowedly, became an *independent Irish interest*; full as independent as it could ever have been, if it had continued in the persons of the native Irish; and it was maintained with more skill, and more consistency than probably it would have been in theirs. With their views, they changed their maxims—it became necessary—it was necessary to demonstrate to the whole people, that there was something at least, of a common interest combined with the independency, which was to become the object of common exertions. The mildness of government produced the first relaxation towards the Irish; the necessities, and, in part too, the temper that predominated at this great change, produced the second and the most important of these relaxations. English government, and Irish legislature felt jointly the propriety of this measure. The Irish parliament and nation became independent.

The true revolution to you, that which most intrinsically and substantially resembled the English revolution of 1688, was the Irish revolution of 1782. The Irish Parliament of 1782, bore little resemblance to that which sat in that kingdom, after the period of the first revolution; it bore a much nearer resemblance (though not at all in its temper) to that which sat under King James. The change of the Parliament in 1782 from the character of the Parliament which, as a token of its indignation, had burned all the journals indiscriminately of the former Parliament in the council chamber, was very visible. The address of King William's Parliament, amongst other causes of complaint (many of them sufficiently just) complains of the repeal by their predecessors of Poyning's law; no absolute idol with the Parliament of 1782.

Great Britain finding the Anglo-Irish highly animated with a spirit, which had indeed shewn itself before, though with little energy, and many interruptions, and therefore suffered a multitude of uniform precedents to be established against it, acted in my opinion, with the greatest temperance and wisdom. She saw, that the disposition of the *leading part* of the nation, would not permit them to act any longer the part of a *garrison*. She saw, that true policy did not require, that they ever should have appeared in that character; or if it had done so formerly, reasons had now ceased to operate. She saw, that the Irish of her race, were resolved to build their constitution and their politics, upon another bottom. With those things under her view, she instantly complied with the whole of your demands, without any reservation whatsoever. She surrendered that boundless superiority, for the preservation of which, and the acquisition, she had supported the English colonies in Ireland for so long a time, and at so vast an expence (according to the standard of those ages) of her blood and treasure.

When we bring before us the matter which history affords for our selection, it is not improper to examine the spirit of the several precedents, which are candidates for our choice. Might it not be as well for your statesmen, on the other side of the water, to take an exam-
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ple from this latter, and surely more conciliatory revolution, as a pattern for your conduct towards your own fellow-citizens, than from that of 1688, when a paramount sovereignty over both you and them, was more loftily claimed, and more sternly exerted, than at any former, or at any subsequent period? Great Britain, in 1782, rose above the vulgar ideas of policy, the ordinary jealousies of state, and all the sentiments of national pride and national ambition. If she had been more disposed than, I thank God for it, she was, to listen to the suggestions of passion, than to the dictates of prudence; she might have urged the principles, the maxims, the policy, the practice of the revolution, against the demands of the leading description in Ireland, with full as much plausibility, and full as good a grace, as any amongst them can possibly do, against the supplications of so vast and extensive a description of her own people; a good deal too, if the spirit of domination and exclusion had then prevailed in England, might be excepted against some of the means then employed in Ireland, whilst her claims were in agitation; as being at least, as much out of ordinary course, as those which are now objected against admitting your people to any of the benefits of an English constitution most certainly, neither with you, nor here, was any one ignorant of what was at that time said, written, or done. But on all sides we separated the means from the end: and we separated the cause of the moderate and rational, from the ill-intentioned and seditious; which on such occasions are so frequently apt to march together. At that time on your part, you were not afraid to review what was done at the revolution of 1688; and what had been continued during the subsequent flourishing period of the British empire. The change then made was a great and fundamental alteration. In the execution, it was an operose business on both sides of the water. It required the repeal of several laws; the modification of many, and a new course to be given to an infinite number of legislative, judicial, and official practices and usages in both kingdoms. This did not frighten any of us. You are now asked to give, in some moderate measure, to your fellow-citizens, what Great Britain gave to you, without any measure at all. Yet, notwithstanding all the difficulties at the time, and the apprehensions which some very well-meaning people entertained, through the admirable temper in which this revolution (or restoration in the nature of a revolution) was conducted in both kingdoms; it has hitherto produced no inconvenience to either, and I trust, with the continuance of the same temper, that it never will. I think that this small inconsiderable change relative to an exclusion statute (not made at the revolution) for restoring the people, to the benefits, from which the green forefathers of a civil war had not excluded them, will be productive of no sort of mischief whatsoever. Compare what was done in 1782, with what is wished in 1792; consider the spirit of what has been done at the several periods of reformation; and weigh maturely, whether it be exactly true, that conciliatory concessions, are of good policy only in discussions between nations; but that among descriptions in the same nation, they must always be irrational and dangerous. What have you suffered in your peace, your prosperity, or in what ought ever to be dear to a nation, your glory, by the last act by which you took the property of that people under the protection of the laws? What reason have you to dread the consequences of admitting them to some share in the protection of the constitution?

I do not mean to trouble you with any thing to remove the objections, I will not call them arguments, against this measure, taken from a ferocious hatred to all that numerous description of Christians. It would be to pay a poor compliment to your understanding or your heart. Neither your religion, nor your politics consist "in odd perverse antipathies." You are resolved to persevere in proscribing from the constitution, so many mil-

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lions of your countrymen, because in contradiction to experience, and to common sense, you think proper to imagine, that their principles are subversive of common human society. To that I shall only say, that whoever has a temper, which can be gratified by indulging himself in these good-natured fancies, ought to do a great deal more. For an exclusion from the privileges of British subjects, is not a cure for so terrible a distemper of the human mind, as they are pleased to suppose in their countrymen. I rather conceive those privileges to be a cure for some mental disorders. As little shall I detain you with matters that can as little obtain admission into a mind like yours, such as the fear, or pretence of fear, that in spite of your own power, and the trifling power of Great Britain, you may be conquered by the Pope; or that this commodious bugbear (who is of infinitely more use to those who pretend to fear, than to those who love him) will absolve his Majesty's subjects from their allegiance, and send over the cardinal of York to rule you as his viceroy; or that, by the plenitude of his power, he will take that fierce tyrant, the king of the French, out of his jail, and arm that nation (which on all occasions treats his holiness so very politely) with his bulls and pardons, to invade poor old Ireland, to reduce you to popery and slavery, and to force the free-born, naked feet of your people into the wooden shoes of that arbitrary monarch. I do not believe that discourses of this kind are held, or that any thing like them will be held, by any who walk about without a keeper. Yet, I confess, that on occasions of this nature, I am the most afraid of the weakest reasonings; because they discover the strongest passions. These things will never be brought out in definite propositions; they would not prevent pity towards any persons; they would only cause it for those who were capable of talking in such a strain. But I know, and am sure, that such ideas as no man will distinctly produce to another, or hardly venture to bring in any plain shape to his own mind—he will utter in obscure, ill-explained doubts, jealousies, surmises, fears, and apprehensions; and that in such a fog, they will appear to have a good deal of size, and will make an impression; when, if they were clearly brought forth and defined, they would meet with nothing but scorn and derision.

There is another way of taking an objection to this concession, which I admit to be something more plausible, and worthy of a more attentive examination. It is, that this numerous class of people is mutinous, disorderly, prone to sedition, and easy to be wrought upon by the insidious arts of wicked and designing men; that conscious of this, the sober, rational, and wealthy part of that body, who are totally of another character, do by no means desire any participation for themselves, or for any one else of their description, in the franchises of the British constitution. I have great doubt of the exactness of any part of this observation. But let us admit that the body of the Catholics are prone to sedition (of which, as I have said, I entertain much doubt) is it possible, that any fair observer or fair reasoner, can think of confining this description to them only? I believe it to be possible for men to be mutinous and seditious who feel no grievance: But I believe no man will assert seriously, that when people are of a turbulent spirit, the best way to keep them in order, is to furnish them with something substantial to complain of.

You separate very properly the sober, rational, and substantial part of their description from the rest. You give, as you ought to do, weight only to the former. What I have always thought of the matter is this, that the most poor, illiterate, and uninformed creatures upon earth, are judges of a *practical* oppression. It is a matter of feeling; and as such persons generally have felt most of it, and are not of

an over lively sensibility, they are the best judges of it. But for the *real cause*, or the *appropriate remedy*, they ought never to be called into council about the one or the other. They ought to be totally shut out; because their reason is weak; because when once roused, their passions are ungoverned; because they want information; because the smallness of the property which individually they possess, renders them less attentive to the consequence of the measures they adopt in affairs of moment. When I find a great cry amongst the people, who speculate little, I think myself called seriously to examine into it, and to separate the real cause from the ill effects of the passion it may excite; and the bad use which artful men may make of an irritation of the popular mind. Here we must be aided by persons of a contrary character; we must not listen to the desperate or the furious; but it is therefore necessary for us to distinguish who are the *really* indigent, and the *really* intemperate. As to the persons who desire this part in the constitution, I have no reason to imagine that they are persons who have nothing to lose and much to look for in public confusion. The popular meeting from which apprehensions have been entertained, has assembled. I have accidentally had conversation with two friends of mine, who knew something of the gentleman who was put into the chair upon that occasion; one of them has had money transactions with him; the other, from curiosity has been to see his concerns: they both tell me he is a man of some property; but you must be the best judge of this, who by your office, are likely to know his transactions. Many of the others are certainly persons of fortune; and all, or most, fathers of families, men in respectable ways of life: and some of them far from contemptible, either for information or for abilities, which they have shewn in the discussion of their interests. What such men think it for their advantage to acquire, ought not, *prima facie*, to be considered as rash or hardy, or incompatible with the public safety or welfare.

I admit, that men of the best fortunes and reputations, and of the best talents and education too; may by accident, shew themselves furious and intemperate in their desires. This is a great misfortune when it happens; for the first presumptions are undoubtedly in their favour. We have two standards of judging in this case of the sanity and sobriety of the proceeding; of unequal certainty indeed, but neither of them to be neglected: the first is by the value of the object sought, the next is by the means through which it is pursued.

The object pursued, I understand, and have all along reasoned as if it were so, is in some degree or measure to be admitted to the franchises of the constitution. Men are considered as under some derangement of their intellects, when they see good and evil in a different light from other men; when they choose nauseous and unwholesome food; and reject such as to the rest of the world seems pleasant, and is known to be nutritive. I have always considered the British constitution, not to be a thing in itself so vitious, as that none but men of deranged understanding, and turbulent tempers could desire a share in it; on the contrary, I should think very indifferently of the understanding and temper of any body of men, who did not wish to partake of this great and acknowledged benefit. I cannot think quite so favourably either of the sense or temper of those, if any such there are, who would voluntarily persuade their brethren that the object is not fit for them, or they for the object. Whatever may be my thoughts, I am quite sure, that they who hold such language, must forfeit all credit with the rest. This is infallible—if they conceive any opinion of their judgment, they cannot

possibly think them their friends. There is, indeed, one supposition, which would reconcile the conduct of such gentlemen to sound reason, and to the purest affection towards their fellow-sufferers; that is, that they act under the impression of a well-grounded fear for the general interest. If they should be told, and should believe the story, that if they dare attempt to make their condition better, they will infallibly make it worse—that if they aim at obtaining liberty, they will have their slavery doubled—that their endeavour to put themselves upon any thing which approaches towards an equitable footing with their fellow-subjects, will be considered as an indication of a seditious and rebellious disposition. Such a view of things ought perfectly to restore the gentlemen, who so anxiously dissuade their countrymen from wishing a participation with the privileged part of the people, to the good opinion of their fellows. But what is to *them* a very full justification, is not quite so honourable to that power from whose maxims and temper, so good a ground of rational terror is furnished. I think arguments of this kind will never be used by the friends of a government which I greatly respect; or by any of the leaders of an opposition whom I have the honour to know, and the sense to admire. I remember Polybius tells us, that during his captivity in Italy as a Peloponnesian hostage—he solicited old Cato to intercede with the senate for his release, and that of his countrymen: this old politician told him that he had better continue in his present condition, however irksome, than apply again to that formidable authority for their relief; that he ought to imitate the wisdom of his countryman Ulysses, who, when he was once out of the den of the Cyclops, had too much sense to venture again into the same cavern. But I conceive too high an opinion of the Irish Legislature to think that they are to their fellow citizen, what the grand oppressors of mankind were to a people whom the fortune of war had subjected to their power. For though Cato could do so with regard to his senate, I should really think it nothing short of impious, to compare an Irish Parliament to a den of Cyclops. I hope the people, both here and with you, will always apply to their representatives with becoming modesty; but at the same time with minds unembarrassed with any sort of terror.

As to the means which they employ to obtain this object, so worthy of the sober and rational minds; I do admit that such means may be used in the pursuit of it, as may make it proper for legislature, in this case, to defer their compliance until the demandants are brought to a proper sense of their duty. A concession in which the governing power of our country loses its dignity, is dearly bought even by him who obtains his object. All the people have a deep interest in the dignity of Parliament. But, as the refusal of franchises which are drawn out of the first vital stamina of the British constitution, is a very serious thing, we ought to be very sure, that the manner and spirit of the application is offensive and dangerous indeed, before we ultimately reject all applications of this nature. The mode of application I hear is by petition. It is the manner in which all the sovereign powers of the world are approached, and I never heard (except in the case of James the second) that any prince considered this manner of supplication to be contrary to the humility of a subject, or to the respect due to the person or authority of the sovereign. This rule, and a correspondent practice, are observed, from the Grand Seigneur, down to the most petty Prince, or Republic in Europe.

You have sent me several papers, some in print, some in manuscript. I think I had seen all of them, except the formula of association. I confess they appear to me to contain matter mischievous and capable
of

of giving alarm, if the spirit in which they are written should be found to make any considerable progress. But I am at a loss to know how to apply them, as objections to the case now before us. When I find that *the general committee* which acts for the Roman Catholics in Dublin, prefers the association proposed in the written draft you have sent me, to a respectful application to Parliament, I shall think the persons who sign such a paper, to be unworthy of any privilege which may be thought fit to be granted; and that such men ought, *by name*, to be excepted from any benefit under the constitution to which they offer this violence. But I do not find that this form of a seditious league has been signed by any person whatsoever, either on the part of *the supposed* projectors, or on the part of those whom it is calculated to seduce. I do not find, on inquiry, that such a thing was mentioned, or even remotely alluded to, in the general meeting of the Catholics, from which so much violence was apprehended. I have considered the other publications, signed by individuals, on the part of certain societies—I may mistake, for I have not the honour of knowing them personally, but I take Mr. Butler and Mr. Tandy not to be Catholics, but members of the established church. Not *one* that I recollect of these publications, which you and I equally dislike, appears to be written by persons of that persuasion. Now, if, whilst a man is dutifully soliciting a favour from Parliament, any person should chuse, in an improper manner, to shew his inclination towards the cause depending; and if that *must* destroy the cause of the petitioner; then, not only the petitioner, but the legislature itself is in the power of any weak friend or artful enemy, that the supplicant, or that the Parliament may have. A man must be judged by his own actions only.* Certain Protestant Dissenters make seditious propositions to the Catholics, which it does not appear that they have yet accepted. It would be strange that the tempter should escape all punishment, and that he who, under circumstances full of seduction and full of provocation, has resisted the temptation, should incur the penalty. You know, that, with regard to the Dissenters, who are *stated* to be the chief movers in this wild scheme of altering the principles of election to a right of voting by the head, you are not able (if you ought even to wish such a thing) to deprive them of any part of the franchises and privileges which they hold on a footing of perfect equality with yourselves. *They* may do what they please with constitutional impunity; but the others cannot even listen with civility to an invitation from them to an ill-judged scheme of liberty, without forfeiting, for ever, all hopes of any of those liberties which we admit to be sober and rational.

It is known, I believe, that the greater, as well as the sounder part of our excluded countrymen, have not adopted the wild ideas, and wilder engagement, which have been held out to them; but have rather chosen to hope small and safe concessions from the legal power, than boundless objects from trouble and confusion. This mode of action seems to me to mark men of sobriety, and to distinguish them from those who are intemperate, from circumstance or from nature. But why do they not instantly disclaim and disavow

* *This proposition, contained in the following sentence, is by no means to be understood as an assertion made by the author, but is evidently taken as a supposition from which, even if it were allowed to be true, no conclusion is to be drawn against the Roman Catholics. The context clearly shews this to be the true meaning. The words "Let us assume" or "let it be granted," are tacitly understood.*

those who make such advances to them? In this too, in my opinion, they shew themselves no less sober and circumspect. In the present moment, nothing short of insanity could induce them to take such a step. Pray consider the circumstances. Disclaim, says somebody, all union with the Dissenters;—right—But, when this your injunction is obeyed, shall I obtain the object which I solicit from you?—Oh, no—nothing at all like it!—But, in punishing us by an exclusion from the constitution, for having been invited to enter into it by a postern, will you punish by deprivation of their privileges, or mulct in any other way, those who have tempted us?—Far from it—we mean to preserve, all *their* liberties and immunities, as *our* life blood. We mean to cultivate *them*, as brethren whom we love and respect—with *you*, we have no fellowship. We can bear, with patience, their enmity to ourselves; but their friendship with you, we will not endure. But, mark it well! All our quarrels with *them*, are always to be revenged upon you. Formerly, it is notorious, that we should have repented with the highest indignation, your presuming to shew any ill will to them. You must not suffer them, now, to shew any good-will to you. Know—and take it once for all—that it is, and ever has been, and ever will be, a fundamental maxim in our politics, that you are not to have any part, or shadow, or name of interest whatever, in our state. That we look upon you, as under an irreversible outlawry from our constitution—as perpetual and unalliable aliens.

Such, my dear Sir, is the plain nature of the argument drawn from the revolution maxims enforced by a *supposed disposition, in the Catholics to unite with the Dissenters*. Such it is, though, it were clothed in never such bland and civil forms, and wrapped up, as a poet says, in a thousand “artful folds of sacred lawn.” For my own part, I do not know in what manner to shape such arguments, so as to obtain admission for them into a rational understanding. Every thing of this kind, is to be reduced, at last, to threats of power.—I cannot say *ve victis*, and then throw the sword into the scale. I have no sword; and if I had, in this case most certainly I would not use it as a make weight, in politic reasoning.

Observe, on these principles, the difference between the procedure of the Parliament and the Dissenters, towards the people in question. One employs courtship, the other force. The Dissenters offer bribes, the Parliament nothing but the *front negative* of a stern and forbidding authority. A man may be very wrong in his ideas of what is good for him. *But no man affronts me, nor can therefore justify my affronting him, by offering to make me as happy as himself, according to his own ideas of happiness.* This the Dissenters do to the Catholics. You are on the different extremes. The Dissenters offer, with regard to constitutional rights and civil advantages of all sorts, *every thing*:—you refuse *every thing*. With them, there is boundless, though not very assured hope; with you, a very sure and very unqualified despair. *The terms of alliance, from the Dissenters, offer a representation of the Commons, chosen out of the people by the head.* This is absurdly and dangerously large, in my opinion; and that scheme of election is known to have been, at all times, perfectly odious to me. But I cannot think it right, of course, to punish the Irish Roman Catholics by an universal exclusion, because others, whom you would not punish at all, propose an universal admission. I cannot dissemble to myself, that, in this very kingdom, many persons who are not in the situation of the Irish Catholics, but who, on the contrary, enjoy the full benefit of the constitution as it stands, and some of whom, from the effect of their fortunes, enjoy it in a
large

large measure, had some years ago associated to procure great and undefined changes (they considered them as reforms) in the popular part of the constitution. Our friend, the late Mr. Flood (no slight man) proposed in his place, and in my hearing, a representation not much less extensive than this, for England; in which every house was to be inhabited by a voter—in addition to all the actual votes by other titles—all those (some of the corporate) which we know do not require a house, or a shed. Can I forget that a person of the very highest rank, of very large fortune, and of the first class of ability, brought a bill into the House of Lords, in the head-quarters of aristocracy, containing identically the same project, for the supposed adoption of which by a club or two, it is thought right to extinguish all hopes in the Roman Catholics of Ireland. I cannot say it was very eagerly embraced or very warmly pursued. But the Lords neither did disavow the bill, nor treat it with any disregard, nor express any sort of disapprobation of its noble author, who has never lost, with king or people, the least degree of the respect and consideration which so justly belongs to him.

I am not at all enamoured, as I have told you, with this plan of representation; as little do I relish any bandings of associations for procuring it. But if the question was to be put to you and me—*universal* popular representation, or *none at all for us and ours*—we should find ourselves in a very awkward position. I do not like this kind of dilemmas, especially when they are practical.

Then, since our oldest fundamental laws follow, or rather couple, freehold with franchise; since no principle of the Revolution shakes these liberties; since the oldest and one of the best monuments of the constitution, demands for the Irish the privilege which they supplicate; since the principles of the Revolution coincide with the declarations of the Great Charter; since the practice of the Revolution, in this point, did not contradict its principles; since, from that event, twenty-five years had elapsed, before a domineering party, on a party principle, had ventured to disfranchise, without any proof whatsoever of abuse, the greater part of the community; since the King's coronation oath does not stand on his way to the performance of his duty to all his subjects; since you have given to all other Dissenters these privileges without limit, which are hitherto withheld, without any limitation whatsoever, from the Catholics; since no nation in the world has ever been known to exclude so great a body of men (not born slaves) from the civil state, and all the benefits of its constitution; the whole question comes before Parliament, as a matter for its prudence. I do not put the thing on a question of right. That discretion which in judicature is well said by Lord Coke to be a crooked cord, in legislature is a golden rule. Supplicants ought not to appear too much in the character of litigants. If the subject thinks so highly and reverently of the sovereign authority, as not to claim any thing of right, that it may not seem to be independent of its power and its free choice: and the sovereign, on his part, considers the advantages of the subjects as their right, and all their reasonable wishes as so many claims; in the fortunate conjunction of these inutual dispositions are laid the foundations of a happy and prosperous commonwealth. For my own part, desiring of all things that the authority of the legislature under which I was born, and which I cherish, not only with a dutiful awe, but with a partial and cordial affection, to be maintained in the utmost possible respect, I never will suffer myself to suppose, that, at bottom, their discretion will be found to be at variance with their justice.

The whole being at discretion, I beg leave just to suggest some matters for your consideration—Whether the government in church
or

or state is likely to be more secure by continuing causes of grounded discontent to a very great number (say two millions) of the subjects? or, Whether the constitution, combined and balanced as it is, will be rendered more solid, by depriving so large a part of the people of all concern, or interest, or share, in its representation, actual or *virtual*? I here mean to lay an emphasis on the word *virtual*. Virtual representation is that in which there is a communion of interests, and a sympathy in feelings and desires between those who act in the name of any description of people, and the people in whose name they act, though the trustees are not actually chosen by them. This is virtual representation. Such a representation I think to be, in many cases, even better than the actual. It possesses most of its advantages, and is free from many of its inconveniencies: it corrects the irregularities in the literal representation, when the shifting current of human affairs, or the acting of public interests in different ways, carry it obliquely from its first line of direction. The people may err in their choice; but common interest and common sentiment are rarely mistaken. But this sort of virtual representation cannot have a long or sure existence, if it has not a substratum in the actual. The member must have some relation to the constituent. As things stand, the Catholic, as a Catholic and belonging to a description, has no *virtual* relation to the representative; but the *contrary*. There is a relation in mutual obligation. Gratitude may not always have a very lasting power; but the frequent recurrency for favours will revive and refresh it, and will necessarily produce some degree of mutual attention. It will produce, at least, acquaintance; the several descriptions of people will not be kept so much apart, as if they were not only separate nations, but separate species. The stigma and reproach, the hideous mask will be taken off, and men will see each other as they are. Sure I am, that there have been thousands in Ireland, who have never conversed with a Roman Catholic in their whole lives, unless they happened to talk to their gardener's workmen, or to ask their way, when they had lost it, in their sports; or, at best, had known them only as footmen, or other domestics of the second or third order: and so averse were they to have them near their persons, that they would not employ even those who could never find their way beyond the stable. I well remember a great, and in many respects, a good man, who advertised for a blacksmith; but, at the same time, added, he must be a Protestant. It is impossible that such a state of things, though natural goodness in many persons would undoubtedly make exceptions, must not produce alienation on one side, and pride and insolence on the other. Reduced to a question of discretion, and that discretion exercised solely upon what will appear best for the conservation of the state on its present basis, I should recommend it to your serious thoughts, whether the narrowing of the foundation is always the best way to secure the building? The body of disfranchised men will not be perfectly satisfied to remain always in that state. If they are not satisfied, you have two millions of subjects in our bosom, full of uneasiness; not that they cannot overturn the act of settlement, and put themselves and you under an arbitrary master; or, that they are not permitted to spawn an hydra of wild republics, on principles of a pretended natural equality in man; but, because you will not suffer them to enjoy the ancient, fundamental, tried advantages of a British constitution: that you will not permit them to profit of the protection of a common father, or the freedom of common citizens. and that the only reason which can be assigned for this disfranchisement, has a tendency more deeply to ulcerate their minds than the act

act of exclusion itself. What the consequence of such feelings must be, it is for you to look to. To warn, is not to menace.

I am far from asserting, that men will not excite disturbances without just cause. I know that such an assertion is not true. But, neither is it true that disturbances have never just complaints for their origin. I am sure that it is hardly prudent to furnish them with such causes of complaint, as every man who thinks the British constitution a benefit, may think, at least, colourable and plausible.

Several are in dread of the manœuvres of certain persons among the Dissenters, who turn this ill humour to their own ill purposes. You know, better than I can, how much these proceedings of certain among the Dissenters are to be feared. You are to weigh, with the temper which is natural to you, whether it may be for the safety of our establishment, that the Catholics should be ultimately persuaded that they have no hope to enter into the constitution, but through the Dissenters.

Think, whether this be the way to prevent, or dissolve factious combinations against the church, or the state. Reflect seriously on the possible consequences of keeping, in the heart of your country, a bank of discontent, every hour accumulating, upon which every description of seditious men may draw at pleasure. *They, whose principles of faction would dispose them to the establishment of an arbitrary monarchy,* will find a nation of men who have no sort of interest in freedom; but who will have an interest in that equality of justice or favour, with which a wise despot must view all his subjects who do not attack the foundations of his power. Love of liberty itself may, in such men, become the means of establishing an arbitrary domination. On the other hand, they who wish for a democratic republic, will find a set of men who have no choice between civil servitude, and the entire ruin of a mixed constitution.

Suppose the people of Ireland divided into three parts; of these, (I speak within compass) two are Catholic. Of the remaining third, one half is composed of Dissenters. There is no natural union between those descriptions. It may be produced. If the two parts Catholic be driven into a close confederacy with half the third part of Protestants, with a view to a change in the constitution in church or state, or both; and you rest the whole of their security on a handful of gentlemen, clergy, and their dependents; compute the strength *you have in Ireland,* to oppose to grounded discontent; to capricious innovation; to blind popular fury, and to ambitious turbulent intrigue. You mention that the minds of some gentlemen are a good deal heated; and that it is often said, that, rather than submit to such persons having a share in their franchises, they would throw up their independence, and precipitate an union with Great Britain.

I have heard a discussion concerning such an union amongst all sorts of men, ever since I remember any thing. For my own part, I have never been able to bring my mind to any thing clear and decisive upon the subject. There cannot be a more arduous question. As far as I can form an opinion, it would not be for the mutual advantage of the two kingdoms; but persons more able than I am, think otherwise. But, whatever the merits of this union may be, to make it a *menace*, it must be shewn to be an *evil*; and an evil more particularly to those who are threatened with it, than to those who hold it out as a terror. I really do not see how this threat of an union can operate, or that the Catholics are more likely to be losers by that measure than the churchmen.

The humours of the people, and of politicians too, are so variable in themselves, and are so much under the occasional influence of some

some leading men, that it is impossible to know what turn the public mind here would take in such an event. There is but one thing certain concerning it: that this union would excite a strong ferment on both sides of the water, with strong animosities and violent passions, whilst the arrangement continued in agitation. Great divisions and vehement passions would precede this union, both on the measure itself and on its terms; and particularly, that this very question of a share in the representation for the Catholics, from whence the project of an union originated, would form a principal part in the discussion; and in the temper in which some gentlemen seem inclined to throw themselves, by a sort of high indignant passion, into the scheme, those points would not be deliberated with all possible calmness.

From my best observation, I should greatly doubt, whether, in the end, these gentlemen would obtain their object, so as to make the exclusion of two millions of their countrymen a fundamental article in the union. The demand would be of a nature quite unprecedented. You might obtain the union: and yet, a gentleman who, under the new union establishment, would aspire to the honour of representing his country, might possibly be as much obliged, as he may fear to be, under the old, to the unsupportable mortification of asking his neighbours, who have a different opinion concerning the elements in the sacrament, for their votes.

I believe, nay, I am sure, that the people of Great Britain, with or without an union, might be depended upon, in cases of any real danger, to aid the government of Ireland with the same cordiality as they would support their own against any wicked attempts to shake the security of the happy constitution in church and state. But, before Great Britain engages in any quarrel, the *cause of the dispute* would certainly be a part of her consideration. If confusions should arise in that kingdom, from too steady an attachment to a proscriptive monopolizing system, and from the resolution of regarding the franchise, and, in it the security of the subject, as belonging rather to religious opinions than to civil qualification and civil conduct, I doubt whether you might quite certainly reckon on obtaining an aid of force from hence, for the support of that system. We might extend your distractions to this country, by taking part in them. England will be indisposed, I suspect, to send an army for the conquest of Ireland. What was done in 1782 is a decisive proof of her sentiments of justice and moderation. She will not be fond of making another American war in Ireland. The principles of such a war would but too much resemble the former one. The well-disposed and the ill-disposed in England, would (for different reasons perhaps) be equally averse to such an enterprise. The confiscations, the public auctions, the private grants, the plantations, the transplantations, which formerly animated so many adventurers, even among sober citizens, to such Irish expeditions, and which possibly might have animated some of them to the American, can have no influence in the case that we suppose.

Let us form a supposition (no foolish or ungrounded supposition) that in an age, when men are infinitely more disposed to heat themselves with political than religious controversies, the former should entirely prevail, as we see they have prevailed, over the latter: and that the Catholics of Ireland, from the courtship paid them on the one hand, and the high tone of refusal on the other, should, in order to enter into all the rights of subjects, all become Protestant Dissenters; and as the others do, take all your oaths. They would all obtain their civil objects, and the change, for any thing I know to the contrary,

contrary, (in the dark as I am about the Protestant Dissenting tenets) be of use to the health of their souls. But, what security our constitution, in church or state, could derive from that event, I cannot possibly discern. Depend upon it, it is as true as nature is true, that if you force them out of the religion of habit, education, or opinion, it is not to yours they will ever go. Shaken in their minds, they will go to that where the dogmas are fewest: where they are the most uncertain: where they lead them the least to a consideration of what they have abandoned. They will go to that uniformly democratic system, to whose first movements they owed their emancipation. I recommend you seriously to turn this in your mind. Believe that it requires your best and maturest thoughts. Take what course you please, union or no union; whether the people remain Catholics, or become Protestant Dissenters, sure it is that the present state of monopoly *cannot* continue.

If England were animated, as I think she is not, with her former spirit of domination, and with the strong theological hatred which she once cherished for that description of her fellow-christians and fellow-subjects; I am yet convinced, that, after the fullest success in a ruinous struggle, you would be obliged finally to abandon that monopoly. We were obliged to do this, even when every thing promised success in the American business. If you should make this experiment at last, under the pressure of any necessity, you never can do it well. But if, instead of falling into a passion, the leading gentlemen of the country themselves should undertake the business cheerfully, and with hearty affection towards it, great advantages would follow. What is forced, cannot be modified; but here, you may measure your concessions.

It is a consideration of great moment, that you may make the desired admission, without altering the system of your representation in the smallest degree, or in any part. You may leave that deliberation of a parliamentary change or reform, if ever you should think fit to engage in it, uncomplicated and unembarrassed with the other question. Whereas, if they are mixed and confounded, as some people attempt to mix and confound them, no one can answer for the effects on the constitution itself.

There is another advantage in taking up this business, singly and by an arrangement for the single object. It is that you may proceed by *degrees*. We must all obey the great law of change. It is the most powerful law of nature, and the means perhaps of its conservation. All we can do, and that human wisdom can do, is to provide that the change shall proceed by insensible degrees. This has all the benefits which may be in change, without any of the inconveniences of mutation. Every thing is provided for as it arrives. This mode will, on the one hand, prevent the *unfixing old interests at once*; a thing which is apt to breed a black and sullen discontent, in those who are at once dispossessed of all their influence and consideration. This gradual course, on the other side, will prevent men, long under depression, from being intoxicated with a large draught of new power, which they always abuse with a licentious insolence. But, wishing, as I do, the change to be gradual and cautious, I would, in my first steps, lean rather to the side of enlargement than restriction. It is one excellence of our constitution, that all our rights of election regard rather property than person. The standard may be so low, or not so judiciously chosen, as in some degree to frustrate the end. But all this is for your prudence in the case before you. You may rise, a step or two, the qualification of the Catholic voters. But, if you were, to-morrow, to put the Catholic freeholder on the

footing of the most favoured forty-shilling Protestant Dissenter, you know that, such is the actual state of Ireland, this would not make a sensible alteration in almost any *one* election in the kingdom. The effect in their favour, even defensively, would be infinitely slow. But it would be healing; it would be satisfactory and protecting. The stigma would be removed, by admitting settled permanent substance in lieu of the numbers; you would avoid the great danger of our time, that of setting up number against property. The numbers ought never to be neglected; because, besides what is due to them as men, collectively, though not individually, they have great property: they ought to have therefore protection: they ought to have security: they ought to have even consideration: but they ought not to predominate.

My dear Sir, I have nearly done; I meant to write you a long letter; I have written a long dissertation. I might have done it earlier and better. I might have been more forcible and more clear, if I had not been interrupted as I have been; and this obliges me not to write to you in my own hand. Though my hand but signs it, my heart goes with what I have written. Since I could think at all, those have been my thoughts. You know that thirty-two years ago they were as fully matured in my mind as they are now. A letter of mine to Lord Kenmare, though not by my desire, and full of lesser mistakes, has been printed in Dublin. It was written ten or twelve years ago, at the time when I began the employment, which I have not yet finished, in favour of another distressed people, injured by those who have vanquished them, or stolen a dominion over them. It contained my sentiments then; you will see how far they accord with my sentiment now. Time has more and more confirmed me in them all. The present circumstances fix them deeper in my mind.

I voted last session, if a particular vote could be distinguished, in unanimity, for an establishment of the church of England, *conjointly* with the establishment which was made some years before by act of Parliament, of the Roman Catholics, in the French conquered country of Canada. At the time of making this English ecclesiastical establishment, we did not think it necessary for its safety, to destroy the former Gallican church settlement. In our first act we settled a government altogether monarchical, or nearly so. In that system, the Canadian Catholics were far from being deprived of the advantages or distinctions, of any kind, which they enjoyed under their former monarchy. It is true, that some people, and amongst them one eminent divine, predicted at that time, that by this step we should lose our dominions in America. He foretold that the Pope would send his indulgences thither; that the Canadians would fall in with France; declare their independence, and draw or force our colonies into the same design. The independence happened according to his prediction; but in directly the reverse order. All our English Protestant colonies revolted. They joined themselves to France; and it so happened that Popish Canada was the only place which preserved its fidelity; the only place in which France got no footing; the only peopled colony which now remains to Great Britain. Vain are all the prognostics taken from ideas and passions, which survive the state of things which gave rise to them. When last year we gave a popular representation to the same Canada, by the choice of the landholders, and an aristocratic representation, at the choice of the crown, neither was the choice of the crown, nor the election of the landholders, limited by a consideration of religion. We had no dread for the Protestant church, which we settled there, because we permitted the French Catholics, in the utmost latitude of the description, to be free

free subjects. They are good subjects, I have no doubt; but I will not allow that any French Canadian Catholics are better men or better citizens than the Irish of the same communion. Passing from the extremity of the west, to the extremity almost of the east; I have been many years (now entering into the twelfth) employed in supporting the rights, privileges, laws, and immunities of a very remote people. I have not as yet been able to finish my task. I have struggled through much discouragement and much opposition; much obloquy; much calumny, for a people with whom I have no tie, but the common bond of mankind. In this I have not been left alone. We did not fly from our undertaking, because the people were Mahometans or Pagans, and that a great majority of the Christians amongst them were Papists. Some gentlemen in Ireland, I dare say, have good reasons for what they may do, which do not occur to me. I do not presume to condemn them; but, thinking, and acting, as I have done, towards these remote nations, I should not know how to shew my face, here or in Ireland, if I should say, that all the Pagans, all the Mussulmen, and even Papists (since they must form the highest stage in the climax of evil) are worthy of a liberal and honourable condition, except those of one of these descriptions, which forms the majority of the inhabitants of the country in which you and I were born. If such are the Catholics; ill-natured and unjust people, from our own data, may be inclined not to think better of the Protestants of a soil which is supposed to infuse into its sects a kind of venom unknown in other places.

You hated the old system as early as I did. Your first juvenile lance was broken against that giant. I think you were even the first who attacked the grim phantom. You have an exceeding good understanding; very good humour, and the best heart in the world. The dictates of that temper and that heart, as well as the policy pointed out by that understanding, led you to abhor the old code. You abhorred it, as I did, for its vicious perfection. For I must do it justice: it was a complete system, full of coherence and consistency; well digested and well composed in all its parts. It was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance; and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of a people, and the debasement, in them, of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man. It is a thing humiliating enough, that we are doubtful of the effect of the medicines we compound. We are sure of our poisons. My opinion ever was (in which I heartily agreed with those that admired the old code) that it was so constructed, that if there was once a breach in any essential part of it; the ruin of the whole, or nearly of the whole, was, at some time or other, a certainty. For that reason I honour, and shall for ever honour and love you, and those who first caused it to stagger, crack, and gape.—Others may finish; the beginners have the glory; and, take what part you please at this hour, (I think you will take the best) your first services will never be forgotten, by a grateful country. Adieu, and believe me, with my best regards to those I know: and as many as I know, I honour in our country. There never was so much ability, or, I believe, virtue, in it. They have a task worthy of both. I doubt not they will perform it, for the stability of the church and state, and for the union and the separation of the people: for the union of the honest and peaceable of all sects: for their separation from all that is ill-intentioned and seditious in any of them.

BEACON'S-FIELD, *January 3, 1792.*

F I N I S,

